

# **Legislative Process**

In order to truly serve the people they represent, legislators need to hear from their constituents about important issues affecting their lives. Personally contacting your elected representatives is one of the most effective ways to get involved in the political process.

This activity, commonly known as "lobbying," is all too often associated with paid professionals or Capitol "insiders." But the truth is that the most influential form of lobbying comes from you, the constituent.

By knowing the basics of the Legislative Process and how a bill becomes a law, you will be better prepared to get involved, make your comments heard and make your opinions count!

## **How A Bill Becomes Law**

### **STEP 1: Research, Development, Drafting and Introduction**

Bill ideas are brought to Legislators from agencies, citizens, the Governor or lobbyists. The Legislator then researches the idea, prepares the language, and introduces the idea. At this time, the bill is assigned a number.

### **STEP 2: Committee Hearings**

After introduction, bills are assigned to Policy Committees. These Committees focus on specific issue areas and are charged with considering all possible ramifications of the bill. At the Committee hearing, the bill's author presents the bill and the Committee hears testimony from citizens, lobbyists and experts before voting on the measure.

Most bills must also be approved by the Appropriations Committee, which is responsible for analyzing the potential state costs of all proposed bills. Public testimony is heard in this Committee as well, but the focus of the Committee is on the potential fiscal impact.

### **STEP 3: Assembly Floor**

After Committees approve a measure, the full Assembly considers the bill during a Floor Session. Members are allowed to debate the measure at length, but no public comment or lobbying is allowed during Floor Sessions.

### **STEP 4: Second House**

Once the Assembly has approved measures, they are sent to the Senate for consideration and approval. Likewise, the Assembly receives all of the measures approved by the Senate. The Senate follows the same Committee and Floor process as the Assembly does.

### **STEP 5: Concurrence in Amendments**

Throughout the legislative process, bills are amended to address concerns and correct mistakes. To become law, a bill must be approved by both the Assembly and the Senate in the exact same form. Thus, if the Senate makes any amendments to an Assembly Bill, that bill must return to the Assembly for one final vote by the full Assembly. This vote is called Concurrence in Senate Amendments and is taken during an Assembly Floor Session. No amendments can be made to a bill at this time.

If the Assembly and Senate cannot agree on amendments, a Conference Committee consisting of 3 Assemblymembers and 3 Senators is appointed. This Committee develops a compromise measure and presents that measure to both houses for approval.

### **STEP 6: Governor's Action**

The Governor has a set time period to sign or veto a bill. If s/he signs the bill, the bill takes effect usually on January 1 of the following year. In some cases, such as during an Extraordinary Session or an urgency bill, the bill may take effect more quickly.

If the Governor vetoes the measure, the Legislature has 60 days to override the veto. Overriding a Governor's veto requires a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote in each house. If the vote is successful, the bill becomes law despite the Governor's veto.

If the Governor does not act on a bill before the required deadline, that bill automatically becomes law without the Governor's signature.

When a bill becomes law, it is transmitted to the Secretary of State, where it is assigned a Chapter Number.